

# Into Battle!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good, well let's turn now to our reading and we are in Ephesians chapter 6 and Edward is finishing our series in Ephesians this morning. So Ephesians chapter 6, there are copies, there are Bibles at the side there. If you don't have a Bible with you, please do grab one of the visitor Bibles if you need to.

And you'll find the reading on page 979 in the visitor Bible, page 979 Ephesians chapter 6 and reading from verse 10.

Ephesians 6 and verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

[ 1 : 3 6 ] In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

To that end, keep alert, with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly, to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

So that you also may know how I am, and what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything.

I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, with love incorruptible. Amen. May God bless his word to us this morning.

[ 3 : 0 2 ] Good morning, friends, and good morning to those at Queen's Park and Bath Street as well. Well, let's turn to Ephesians chapter 6, beginning to read at verse 10.

This is our last sermon in this series, and my title for this morning is, Into Battle. Now, Paul has been teaching the Ephesians in the last few paragraphs about the very down-to-earth business of relationships.

How Christian husbands are to relate to their wives, Christian parents to their children, Christian slaves to their masters. But at chapter 6, verse 10, he changes gear dramatically.

He lifts the eyes of the Ephesians from the very humdrum concerns of their daily life, to the warfare that is being waged in the heavenly places. So he lifts their eyes from things that they can see to things that they cannot see, but cannot avoid being engaged with.

And as Paul prepares to sign off and finish his letter, he feels that he must teach the Ephesian Christians about the reality of the devil. Not only the devil's reality, but his ferocity and wickedness.

[ 4 : 21 ] Now, we might ask why Paul should decide to include a passage like this in Ephesians, while he says nothing really along these lines in his other letters. He does, of course, mention the devil briefly in other letters, but he gives him no extended treatment in the other letters.

The reason for this, for Paul including this teaching in Ephesians, is probably that Ephesus had been a center of occult practice. Paul's gospel work in Ephesus is recorded for us in Acts chapter 19, where we read this.

Many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.

And they counted the value of the books and found it came to 50,000 pieces of silver. That was some bonfire. But it happened because the owners of those books really had turned to Christ, and they realized that if you come to Christ, you have to renounce devilish practices absolutely.

Now, we people live in an age that is full of scientific research and discovery, and a great deal of scientific discovery brings blessings to us, great blessings.

[ 5 : 40 ] So, for example, in this country, we have clean water from our kitchen taps. We don't die of tuberculosis in early adult life, as so many people did in the 19th century.

We plow our fields with state-of-the-art tractors. We no longer rely on the old Clydesdale heavy horse. So science and technology have brought us great benefits.

But the downside of the great scientific movement of this last two or three centuries is that it can lead us to believe that nothing is real unless it can be weighed and measured.

Put a ruler to it, measure it, it's there. Look at it through a telescope or a microscope. It's material, therefore it's real. But if something can't be described in the terms of physics, chemistry, and biology, you can discard it as being highly improbable and probably non-existent.

There's an intriguing moment in Shakespeare's Hamlet when Hamlet says to his friend Horatio, there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

[ 6 : 47 ] And Paul the Apostle would say a hearty amen to Hamlet's words. The devil and his wicked warfare against the church were realities about which Paul needed no convincing.

If you'd asked Jesus if he believed in the devil's existence, he would have given you an old-fashioned look and said to you, I have met him. I know him. He has no power at all over me.

I'm his master and he hates me for it. But he uses all his craft and capacity to disrupt the life of the church. The apostles Peter and John were equally aware of the malignant power of the devil.

So Peter writes in his first letter, chapter 5, John writes in his first letter, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

And when Jesus prays for his disciples in John's Gospel, chapter 17, he says to God the Father, I do not ask that you take my disciples out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

[ 8 : 01 ] Now, why did he pray that prayer? Because he knew the evil one's power and his malignant intentions. No instruments of modern science will ever be able to photograph the devil or weigh him or measure him, but we must be in no doubt of his existence and his malice and his power.

But ultimately, if we belong to the Lord Jesus, we have no cause to be afraid of the devil. But we need this teaching in Ephesians 6 to arm us for lifelong battle with this wretched enemy.

So let's turn to our passage and see how, first of all, how Paul profiles the devil. What is the devil like? We do need to know. Otherwise, we will underestimate him.

We need to know our enemy. During the Second World War, a fierce campaign was waged in North Africa between British Allied troops, led by General Bernard Montgomery, and German Allied troops, led by General Rommel.

And in his battle caravan in the desert, General Montgomery had a framed photograph of General Rommel, and it was mounted up in a prominent position so that he could look at it frequently.

[ 9 : 15 ] And when people asked him why he wanted to look at Rommel every day, he simply replied, I need to know my enemy. And in the same way, Paul gives us a picture of our enemy in these verses, lest we should underestimate him.

So what do we see? Well, first, Paul shows us that our enemy is both single and multiple. He is in verse 11, the devil.

In verse 16, the evil one, single. But verse 12 opens up to us a whole army of malicious powers. Verse 12, We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Now that phrase, flesh and blood, means human beings like you and me. We have flesh, we have blood, and we're pretty puny. Paul had to do battle with many human beings during his long career as a missionary, and he suffered a great deal at their hands.

But they were only human. And in verse 12, he's telling us about enemies in the realms that we cannot see. And what he's emphasizing in verse 12 is the power of these unseen enemies.

[ 10 : 38 ] All the phrases that he uses in verse 12 suggest great power. We're wrestling against the rulers, the authorities, against the cosmic powers.

And how do these wretched cosmic powers display their power? Well, look at the next phrase. It's they who preside over, they who cause this present darkness.

Paul is describing our world in that phrase. If our world were filled with light, human beings would know God truly, and we would live life in his way. But Paul, taught by the Lord, sees the real state of the world, dominated by greed and selfishness, expressed in brutal warfare, the persecution of the church, and blindness to the beauty and glory of Christ.

It is a very dark world that we live in. And it's the cosmic powers which sustain and preside over the darkness. And look at Paul's next phrase.

The spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. That phrase, the heavenly places, means the sphere of invisible reality. And these forces, says Paul, are evil.

[ 11 : 51 ] So verse 12 opens up to us a sobering picture of a powerful and wicked enemy. Rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and forces of evil.

And where are we in relation to this gruesome multiple enemy? Well, we're in the ring. We're like wrestlers. And that's the verb that Paul uses here in verse 12. We are wrestling against, not flesh and blood, but against these formidable combatants.

One Bible translation describes them as spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil. And we are wrestling against them, says Paul. And that word against describes fierce conflict.

And you'll see that Paul uses it five times in just this one verse, verse 12. Not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers, against the spiritual forces of evil.

And it's there also in verse 11, against the schemes of the devil. Six times the word against. Now, friends, don't lose heart because Paul is about to tell us how we can wrestle with these horrible forces and not be overcome by them.

[ 13 : 06 ] But we do need to reckon on their character. They are not gentlemanly. They don't obey any rules. They have no code of honor. They are utterly unscrupulous.

They are evil. And their aim is to take us out. They want to get their fingers, so to speak, on our jugulars and squeeze the Christian life out of us.

They want to knock us out so that we can't rise at the count of ten. They want us to desert our Lord Jesus and to re-embrace the darkness. But our enemies are not only powerful, they're cunning.

You'll see at the end of verse 11, Paul writes of the schemes of the devil. One translation gives it as the wiles of the devil. And the devil is portrayed as crafty and cunning right the way through the Bible.

We first meet him in Genesis chapter 3, where we read this. Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made.

[ 14 : 12 ] And it's by his subtle, persuasive talk that he lures Adam's wife into rebelling against God's clear commandment. The great tactic that he uses on Eve, it's a tactic, of course, he uses on all of us, is to suggest that God's words are not clear and not really important.

So he says to Eve, did God really say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And that's just the kind of question that he drops into the ears of all of us regularly.

For example, does God really say that there is a hell as well as a heaven? Does the Bible really say that trusting Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven?

Is the Bible absolutely explicit that homosexual activity is sinful in the sight of God? The devil is very persuasive and he uses flesh and blood as the willing channels of his persuasive talk.

In fact, questions of that kind often come from the mouths of people who profess to follow Christ. Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 that the devil will transform himself into an angel of light.

[ 15 : 29 ] Sometimes he attacks Christians brutally, head on, through violent persecution. When he does that, he's like a roaring lion. But very often, he takes the approach of the subtle serpent, insinuating himself into the thinking of those who are not firmly committed to the sufficiency and finality of the Bible.

And those people are sometimes theological writers and church leaders. We live in dangerous territory and we need to be alive to the dangers. Now the schemes of the devil take many forms, but one of his most successful deceptions is to get people simply to believe that he doesn't exist.

If we deny his reality, we simply lay ourselves open to more of his subtlety. Let me quote what Martin Lloyd-Jones said about this as he was preaching through Ephesians some 70 years ago.

He said, I'm certain that one of the main causes of the ill state of the church today is the fact that the devil is being forgotten. All is attributed to us.

We've all become so psychological in our attitude and thinking. We are ignorant of this great objective fact, the being, the existence of the devil, the adversary, the accuser, and his fiery darts.

[ 16 : 58 ] Now it's possible that some of you here this morning or watching on the screen may be thinking, I can hardly believe that I'm hearing what I'm hearing. I mean, haven't we, after all, outgrown all this stuff about Satan and demons centuries ago?

Well, all I can say to you, my friend, is that if that's what you're thinking, your argument is not so much with me, but with the apostle Paul. I'm just the messenger. I don't mind what you think about me, but you've got to reckon with Paul, who is Christ's apostle.

And Jesus himself had so much to say about the devil. Was Jesus wrong? Was Jesus deceived? Listen to his words in John's Gospel, chapter 8.

The devil was a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

So was Jesus deceived in his teaching about the devil? Did he lack the sophistication and insight of the 21st century intellectual who dismisses the idea of the devil as primitive superstition?

[ 18 : 10 ] In the same chapter in John's Gospel, Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Had a few bulbs blown in the heavenly chandelier when the Lord started talking about the devil?

No. We ignore Jesus' teaching at our peril. And what Paul, as Jesus' mouthpiece, is saying about the devil is recorded for our benefit and for our blessing.

So how does Paul equip the church to deal with this cunning and powerful and unseen enemy? Well, the answer is that Paul gives us two commands at the beginning of this section.

The first comes in verse 10. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Be strong. Then the second one comes in verse 11.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. So two commands. Be strong in the Lord and put on the armor of God.

[ 19 : 14 ] And we'll look at those two commands now in order. So first of all, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. That verse is not only a command to be strong, it also shows us where we can draw our strength from.

The situation would be hopeless if we simply had the command, be strong. I think we'd reply, but we have no strength. You're asking a mouse to take on a lion.

It can't be done. But it's the second half of the verse that shows us that it can be done. If the Lord, that is the Lord Jesus, pours his strength into us, if the Lord fills our puny muscles with his muscle power, it then becomes possible for us to wage war with this enemy and not to be defeated.

Now I just want to spend a moment thinking of this lovely phrase in verse 10, the strength of his might. The strength of his might. Paul is saying absolutely clearly that the strength of Christ's might is available to the Christian and to the church.

That word might is a terrific word. It suggests an immeasurable reservoir of power. So what do we know about the strength and might of the Lord Jesus?

[ 20 : 34 ] Well, think about these few things. Think first of the power of his voice. He stilled a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee in just a moment by speaking to the wind and the waves.

Peace be still. On one occasion, he raised a 12-year-old girl from the dead by speaking to her. Little girl, I say to you, get up.

And up she got. On another occasion, he went to the tomb of his dear friend Lazarus who'd been dead for four days. Lazarus, come out, he cried.

And out came Lazarus from his tomb, still wrapped up in his winding sheet. In calling Lazarus from his tomb, Jesus was fulfilling his own prophecy given just a short time before when he said, Truly I say to you, an hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live.

The voice of Jesus, nothing more than his voice, has the power to wake the dead. Just as the voice of God the Father brought into being the galaxies and the stars in their trillions.

[ 21 : 43 ] Then think of the resurrection of Jesus himself. The raising of the 12-year-old girl and of Lazarus were just curtain raisers for that moment a year or two later when Jesus himself was raised from the dead.

Paul writes this in Ephesians 1, verse 19. He writes of the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

The power of God at work in Jesus didn't simply raise Jesus from the dead. It took him up to heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father, proclaiming Jesus to be the king of everything.

And the power of Jesus was also displayed greatly at the cross. Paul says in Colossians chapter 2 that God forgave us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This God set aside, nailing it to the cross. And Paul goes on in that same passage to say that at the cross, not only was the debt of all our sins cancelled, but God also disarmed the rulers and the authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them at the cross.

[ 23 : 09 ] And those are the very rulers and authorities that Paul is writing about in verse 12 in our passage. Their defeat has been achieved by Jesus on the cross.

They've been openly put to shame precisely because Jesus has displayed his mastery over them. They haven't been finally destroyed, but their ultimate destruction is certain.

And this is perhaps one reason why they are so hostile to the Lord's people. They've been openly shamed. They've been rumbled. Their weakness compared with the might of the Lord Jesus has been displayed to the church.

They're angry. They're a bit like a football team who've been beaten 20-0 and it's now the last three minutes of the game and they're trying to get a consolation goal. They hate the church, but Christ has displayed his complete mastery over them.

Now we're still thinking of this phrase, the strength of the might of our Lord Jesus. Think of the portrait of Jesus given to us in the four Gospels. Is he ever fazed?

[ 24 : 14 ] Is he ever cowed or wrong-footed? Never. Whether he's teaching, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, going to the cross, rising from death, he strides through the pages of the Gospels like a gladiator, like an invincible champion.

He is the king. For a brief moment, he made himself vulnerable and killable so that he could cancel the debt of our sins. But on the third day, he rose in glorious power.

As Paul puts it trenchantly in Romans chapter 6, Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. So coming back to Ephesians 6 verse 10, when Paul writes of the strength of the might of Christ, he is writing about an immeasurable reservoir of power.

And in verse 10, Paul is telling us that as we face the fierceness and cunning of the devil, we go forth to battle relying on that power. So practically speaking, how do we avail ourselves of it?

Well, simply by asking. For example, as we sing in our hymn, I am weak, but thou art mighty. Hold me with thy powerful hand.

[ 25 : 36 ] Pray like that. Acknowledge your weakness. Ask him to strengthen you with his might and then step forward to do whatever difficult thing you have to do. Ask him, lean your weight on him and step forward.

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Well, now comes Paul's second command in verse 11. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

And if you look onto verse 13, you'll see it repeats verse 11 almost word for word. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.

Now, friends, it's going to help us greatly if we can see clearly what the aim, what the purpose of putting on this armor of God is. It is simply to stand, to be still standing at the end of the battle.

Verse 11, so that you may be able to stand. And verse 13, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. The evil day is a season of great pressure and having done all to stand firm.

[ 26 : 57 ] And just in case we hadn't quite heard it, he repeats that goal at the start of verse 14. Stand, therefore. Before the days of modern warfare, we've all seen lots of war films, haven't we?

But before the days of modern warfare, right up to the 20th century, battles were fought as two armies rushed against each other shouting. And on the field of battle, they would go at each other for hours, piercing, hacking, cleaving, using firearms, swords, battle axes, pikes, whatever weapons they had.

And in old-fashioned warfare, the battle could last for hours. And at the end of the day, while many soldiers lay dead or wounded, some soldiers, those who were wearing the best armor, were still standing.

Now that was the aim, to be still on your feet as darkness fell and the terrible day was over. That's the aim. Now every Christian is called to be a soldier because there is a war on.

We're involved in a monumental struggle. In the Western world, there's no serious persecution of Christians going on, but the devil is continually assaulting the atmosphere that we breathe with lies and deceptions.

[ 28 : 16 ] And our job, the job of all Christians, is to expose those lies for what they are and to counter them by openly stating the truth. But our warfare is not easy because even the Lord's disciples are constantly being bombarded with untruths and half-truths.

You'll see in verse 16 that Paul speaks of all the flaming darts of the evil one. And that is a very nasty picture. In ancient warfare, some troops would dip their arrows into pitch or tar and then light them before firing them.

So a shower of arrows would come at you not only threatening to pierce your entrails but to set your clothing on fire. So if you didn't bleed to death, you'd burn to death. It's Paul's way of describing how vicious Satan's attacks on us are.

So we have Paul's two commands to us. Be strong in the Lord, verse 10, and then put on the whole armor of God in verse 11 which is repeated in verse 13.

Now we'll look at each piece of the armor in just a moment. But let's first notice how Paul's two commands in both of them he speaks of God's part and our part.

[ 29 : 33 ] In fact, in everything Paul writes in all his letters he speaks of God's part and man's part and it's right the same through the Bible. God is always the initiator.

He acts. He blesses. He provides. But man's part is to get off man's backside and respond actively. The Bible never encourages fatalism.

Fatalism says sit back and just let it all happen. What will be will be. Fate will have its way and there's nothing we can do about it. Now the Bible is never like that.

God doesn't treat human beings like puppets. He treats us as responsible. He provides but he expects us to make use of what he provides. And that's what we find here in verses 10 and 11.

He provides the strength of his might. He provides the whole armor. That's why it's called the armor of God not the armor of man. But he now expects us to avail ourselves of his provision.

[ 30 : 39 ] He says put it on. He doesn't say there there I'll put it on for you. He's looking for an active response. Put it on verse 11 take up the whole armor of God verse 13 and again verse 14 stand therefore having fastened on the belt of truth.

and so the verbs go on having put on the breastplate of righteousness having put on the shoes for your feet and so on. So Paul is addressing us as people who are by nature unprepared.

We lack the equipment that we need. We're rather like soldiers standing in the barrack room with nothing on but our underpants and a pair of socks. Now we've got some work to do before we're ready to go onto the field of battle.

We've got to pick up each piece of armor and actually put it on and we may fumble a bit and find it hard to fasten things on that we're not used to fastening on. When I was when I was 13 years old I went away to a rather old-fashioned boarding school where we had to wear shirts that had separate collars.

I wonder if anybody else had to put on a shirt with a separate collar. They were semi-stiff collars and you attach them to your shirt with a metal stud at the back and another metal stud at the front.

[ 31 : 57 ] And when you were 13 and you'd never done this it was torture. I didn't know how to get the silly collar on properly. Some of the boys even shed tears because they couldn't get them on in time for breakfast.

One boy would say to another is my collar on straight? The other one would say no it's a shambles you look like the start of a wet week. Well eventually we got the hang we learned how to do it but we only learned how to do it by doing it.

Now we too only learn to put on the armour of God by doing it. The Lord is calling us to be active but if we don't do it we shan't remain standing at the end of the day.

We'll be lying dead on the battlefield. Let's make no mistake about what Paul means by standing. to stand firm at the end of the battle means to survive lifelong as a believer so that whether you die at 30 or at 90 your trust in the Lord Jesus has not dimmed your joy in the Lord has not been snuffed out your willingness to be unashamed of the Lord's words has not faltered.

Now you're a Christian you're not proud of your faith but you're proud of your Lord Jesus. The world, the flesh and the devil have thrown their full arsenal against you but your armor has made you stand firm.

[ 33 : 23 ] It's the armor of God and he has equipped you with it. The armor is for each individual Christian to use but Paul is addressing the whole church here as a body.



The verbs throughout this passage are plural verbs and that reminds us that we're in this battle together. So friends let's look at it piece by piece, remembering that it's the whole armor of God that Paul tells us to put on.

I think what he means is one or two pieces will be insufficient. We need the whole suit. First then from verse 14 we fasten on the belt of truth.

Jesus said famously to Pontius Pilate everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice to which Pilate replied what is truth?

He was a senior official of the Roman Empire carrying great responsibility but he wasn't interested in truth. But Christians are interested in truth and we need to know it and it becomes like a belt around our middles giving us strength and stability to our whole understanding.

[ 34 : 35 ] Now the devil will come along to us and say go easy on the truth just chill a bit there's more than one way to skin a cat relax a bit be flexible be open minded that's a great phrase isn't it of the devil be open minded now the Christian learns to reply I'm not listening to you you old deceiver Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life Jesus is the truth the Bible is the truth Christianity is the truth then second from verse 14 put on the breastplate of righteousness now this is a marvelous piece of protection the word translated righteousness is the word that is usually in Paul's letters translated justification and what Paul means by justification is acquittal in God's courtroom it's a forensic word it means that God has promised a verdict of not guilty to us and that's what he's pronounced on a particular individual why why not guilty because

Christ has taken the penalty for sin the wages of sin that that individual deserved he has died in place of that individual and has wiped away all record of that individual's sin in the sight of God so that individual is now clean forgiven delivered and righteous through trusting in Christ's work on the cross to be justified is to be given a new status that cannot be taken away from us it means that you are forever in God's favor ransomed healed restored forgiven now the devil will come along to us and say I've been observing you rather carefully today I have x-ray eyes I know what goes on in your heart you are a sinful human being you've thought and said some pretty rotten things today haven't you you're a sinful little soul aren't you admit it go on admit it but you learn to reply

I don't deny that I'm a sinner I know that only too well but my sins all my sins both those that I have committed and those that I will commit have been taken from my record by the death of Christ I am justified I'm in a state of righteousness in the sight of God so run away you foul beast good to address him like that keeps him in his place thirdly verse 15 footwear Paul writes as shoes for your feet having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace now the picture here is of an active person who is ready to share the gospel of peace with people who very much need to hear it and it's the gospel of peace because it's the good news of peace with God and peace and reconciliation with other people of course the devil is interested in this aspect of a Christian's life because the last thing he wants is for Christians to go around announcing the gospel so he'll come to us and say you're feeling very tired today aren't you

I think you've got a headache coming on you're stressed look I should stay in today stay at home don't go to that life course thing that you're always talking about certainly don't go out on the streets seeking to evangelize people but you can say to him haven't you read Isaiah how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news who publishes peace who brings good news of happiness who publishes salvation haven't you read that the gospel announces peace with God to weary sinners I'm going to keep on telling it so get back to your dirty hovel you fraud fourth verse 16 the shield of faith look at verse 16 in all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one now the shield physically the shield that Paul has in mind here was the large rectangular shield which the Roman soldier would take into battle apparently was about two and a half feet wide and nearly four feet tall very strong and bound at both top and bottom with iron and specially designed to extinguish actually to put out any flaming arrows that were fired into it now what might these flaming arrows be in our experience well they can be the devil's accusations such as you're a poor

Christian aren't you you're puny you're a lightweight or it could be those thoughts that suddenly come at us unsought unwanted but real thoughts of doubt disobedience malice lust envy but Paul is saying these flaming arrows can be quenched extinguished how by the shield of faith so what does it mean to exercise faith it means we turn to the Lord as our refuge as King David often says to God in the Psalms Lord you are my refuge my fortress the stronghold in whom I trust so we turn to him and then we remember his promises his promises are a wonderful protection for example God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life so you say to the Lord you've promised me Lord everlasting life I know that you'll keep your promises you never lie I'm safe with you so when we're assailed with doubt or depression let's turn to

[ 40 : 35 ] God's promises when we're assailed with temptation let's ask him for power to resist it's the faithful Christian the trusting Christian who turns to him when the flaming darts are flying then verse 17 take the helmet of salvation everyone who belongs to the Lord Jesus is able to say I have been saved I am being saved and I will be saved utterly at the end the Bible teaches those three tenses of salvation and to get the truth of our salvation firmly into our heads is a great protection for us so why is this the helmet of salvation I think the reason is that it protects our heads it's inside our heads that we do our thinking I personally do my thinking between my left ear and my right ear and I guess you're the same and those processes of thought need protection in 1

Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul says put on for a helmet the hope of salvation and that phrase from 1 Thessalonians helps us to understand this phrase in Ephesians the word hope in Paul's vocabulary means conviction of an assured future outcome it's not some vague hope it's a sure and certain expectation so when that sure and certain expectation of our final salvation gets deeply fixed inside our heads we can face the troubles of life calmly knowing that ultimately all is well then number six still in verse 17 and take the sword of the spirit which is the word of God now the other five pieces of the armor are all protective and defensive this is the one piece of the armor that is offensive its purpose is to cut and thrust and stab the vitals of the enemy it's the word of

God it's the Bible and the better we know it and the more we store it away in our memories the more we shall be untroubled by the temptations of Satan and I'm sure you know this but Jesus gives a master class in the use of the Bible in his encounter with Satan in the wilderness and the record of that encounter in Matthew's and Luke's gospels is there to teach us how to deal with temptation temptation you probably remember three times Satan comes at Jesus with a powerful temptation if you're the son of God turn these stones into loaves of bread if you're the son of God throw yourself down off the pinnacle of the temple and the angels will be your safety net and thirdly look at the kingdoms of the world and all their glory they are mine but I will give them to you all of them if you fall down and worship me and each time each time the devil throws these temptations at the

Lord Jesus and we need to realize that these were powerful temptations they were real temptations for our Lord but each time Jesus replies it is written and he quotes a thoroughly apt passage from the Old Testament so he's using the Bible as the sword of the spirit and Satan cannot gain mastery over him and in the end the devil slinks away so friends let's stuff ourselves with the Bible it's not just knowledge for us it's life it's protection it will arm us with the power to attack the devil and send him away with a flea in his ear then finally in verses 18 to 20 Paul opens up to our view the whole battlefield by telling us to pray verse 18 praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication to that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints so Paul is saying to us be people of prayer as you wage war on the battlefield keep the lines of communication between yourself and the

Lord very often open the Lord's ear is never closed to pray to take refuge in him is another strong form of protection so here are one or two examples of how we might pray Lord I'm assailed by uncertainties be my rock be my source of assurance amen Lord I'm fearful help me to be brave amen Lord I'm tempted to say nothing help me to honor you with my words amen Lord I am weak but thou art mighty stiffen my spine help me to face this challenge amen prayers don't need to be long and prayers do not need to be eloquent they simply need to be meant as one of our old hymns puts it cast care aside lean on thy guide in our prayer we lean on him and we find that he's more than able to support us and you'll see at the end of verse 18

[ 45 : 59 ] Paul urges us to pray for all the saints again let me give you one or two examples Lord help Joe today as he goes to his interview amen Lord sustain my dear granddad in his dementia help him deep inside to keep trusting your promises Lord strengthen Simon as he preaches this evening make his sermon put joy and confidence into the people who are listening and then in verses 19 and 20 Paul surprises us by asking the Ephesians to pray for him for Paul did Paul need their prayers wasn't Paul as bold as a lion well clearly he didn't feel bold because he asks them in verse 19 that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the gospel and in verse 20 again he asks for boldness in declaring the gospel so Paul knew the temptation to trim the gospel of its more challenging elements he needed boldness now that is a temptation for all preachers to trim the gospel of its more challenging elements let's pray for our preachers of today that they will be bold bold enough to proclaim the whole gospel and to proclaim the ethics of the gospel our preachers of today friends need to be prepared to go to prison if necessary

I do mean that only if you're prepared to go to prison because you're accused of breaking some law only if you're prepared for that will you risk saying everything that needs to be said these walls have ears who knows who's listening these days we live in a surveillance society today's preachers need a level of courage that was not required a generation ago well time is up it's time to take the bales off and draw the stumps in the final few verses here Paul shows just how much he loves his Ephesian friends so he wants Tychicus verse 21 Tychicus presumably acted as postman taking the letter to Ephesus well he wants Tychicus to pass on all his news to the Ephesian Christians Paul didn't write these letters from some academic ivory tower he loved these Ephesians to pieces he wants them to know how he's getting on but he ends with a phrase that contains a wonderful challenge a phrase that is deeply loving but deeply searching he says verse 24 grace be with all who love our Lord

Jesus Christ with love incorruptible or as another version puts it with love undying now friends that is the Christian life to go into battle for the Lord Jesus with a love for him that never dies but if we're to do that if that's going to happen to you and me we need to put on the whole armor of God so that we may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to be still standing firm at the end well let's bow our heads and we'll pray our dear heavenly father we confess to you our own weakness we think of this powerful cunning enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour and our prayer is for every person here today that you will help us so to learn to put on the armor piece by piece that at the end of everything we are still standing firm and help us dear father by the firmness and the standing firm of our lives to commend the gospel to many others that they may see our lives and realize that we are supported and sustained by a wonderful

God in whom all can put their trust and we ask it in Jesus name amen will appear fill to Foi may in Hero v to